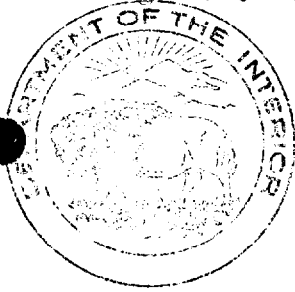


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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Release to the
PMS OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 1944.

Continuing the upward trend begun last year, production in the major U. S. fisheries made encouraging increases during the first six months of 1944 as compared with 1943, although catches of a few important species are lagging behind last year's figures, the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries reported today.

A survey of production just completed by the Coordinator's Office shows that although landings of California pilchards, Pacific mackerel, and shrimp are smaller than last year, these losses are more than counterbalanced by increases in the production of California tuna, landings at New England ports, and the pack of Maine sardines.

Since the first six months normally account for only a fourth of the year's total landings, the fishing industry still has ample time to increase the present lead over 1943 production.

Landings of fresh fish at the major New England ports -- Boston, Gloucester, New Bedford, and Portland, are substantially larger than last year, totaling 207,215,000 pounds or a 16 percent gain over last year's production of 178,989,000 pounds. By the end of June, Gloucester had received 80,356,000 pounds of fish and shellfish, compared with Boston's 75,720,000, New Bedford's 43,827,000, and Portland's 7,312,000 pounds. Landings at Gloucester and New Bedford increased about 33 percent over last year, while Boston's receipts were 5 percent less, and Portland also showed a small decline.

The California tuna fishery, enjoying its best year since 1940, furnishes one of the most important increases. Landings during the first six months were 50 percent larger than last year, totaling 52,948,000 pounds, while the canned pack reached 1,149,370 cases, a gain of 61 percent.

Less successful than the tuna industry, the Pacific mackerel fishery is having a relatively poor year. Landings amounted to 7,868,000 pounds for the first half of the year, as against 9,007,524 in 1943. The canned pack showed a corresponding decrease: 84,982 cases compared with 95,799.

The Maine sardine industry has already packed 1,110,000 cases, or an increase of 35 percent over its production of canned fish last year. A considerable quantity of the sardines packed in Maine canneries is imported from Canada.

In the Gulf area, shrimp and oysters declined while crabs made important

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gains. Because of labor difficulties and a scarcity of shrimp, production in the important shrimp fishery is 28 percent behind last year, with 73,340 barrels landed as against 101,738 in 1943. Oysters fell from 689,401 barrels to 459,306; while crabs increased from 3,795,514 pounds to 5,115,130.

The Pacific coast pilchard fishery, which alone produces a fourth of the total poundage taken by U. S. fishermen, is inactive from April through July in California, the center of the fishery. From January through March, however, production amounted to 81,417 tons, or a decline of 8 percent compared with the same period in 1943. Fishing for pilchards will be resumed from northern California ports on August 1.

Fresh fish came into New York's wholesale markets in somewhat greater quantity than last year, totaling 126,487,132 pounds compared with 113,578,899. On the other hand, in Chicago, most important inland market for fish, receipts declined from 39,735,000 pounds last year to 33,915,000. The scarcity of shrimp and the late opening of the halibut season were probably important reasons for the decline, for these two products normally outrank all others in volume of sales in Chicago.

Total production by all fisheries last year was approximately 4,000,000,000 pounds, and it is hoped that the yield may reach 4,300,000,000 in 1944. Although the fishing fleet is approaching its pre-war size through new construction and the return of many vessels requisitioned by the Army and Navy, lack of sufficient manpower to operate boats and shore plants, as well as inadequate refrigeration, have hampered production.

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